

businesses but for this community. And a lot of thought has to go into this. Each and every person who lost a business will have to decide, "Well, what am I going to do? Am I going to rebuild here or not? Or, if I'm going to rebuild, am I going to do it somewhere else?" And the county has to decide what to do about the courthouse site. A lot of decisions have to be made.

And we have decided that what we should do is to put together a task force representing all the different departments in the Federal Government that could be of any help, that will be able to work with you over the long run. I don't want you to think that the Federal Government comes down here, there's an emergency, sends out a few checks, and then we walk away. So we're going to set up a long-term task force. We will be with you all the way. And again I will say, I predict that within a couple of years, Arkadelphia will be back stronger than ever and you will like what you see here. You will have to plan your own future. You will have to execute it. But we want to stay with you.

Let me also tell you that these storm centers—and you already know this, but I have to say this to people in other States who've been afflicted—if you've been looking at the television you have seen people literally buried in avalanches of water in Ohio, in Kentucky, and in West Virginia. Today I'm declaring a major disaster in Kentucky and Ohio because of the floods that are there, and we will begin to immediately help them. The Vice President and Mr. Witt are going to go to those two States tomorrow to view the damage and to report back to me.

The final thing I'd like to say is that when I heard about this, the first thing that struck me was not only the physical devastation but that the number of people who died here in the space of about 18 hours are equal—almost equal to the number of people who died from tornadoes in the entire 12 years that I had the honor of being Governor of Arkansas. And so Hillary and I said a prayer for those people and their families, and I would just like to ask that all the rest of us who were unscathed by this, keep those folks in mind, as well as those who were injured and those who lost everything they had. They're all going to need our help.

There are people here who have come from other States already to help. And if we keep the right spirit and all of you keep the light in your eyes that I saw today when person after person after person said, "Well, we'll get over this. This is Arkansas. We know how to behave. We know what to do." You do know what to do, and I'll be honored to help you every step of the way. And I thank you for giving me the chance to share this with you today. As difficult as it is, I very much wanted to be here, and I'm glad I came.

Thank you.

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Q. Mr. President, a couple of questions on other topics. One question, apparently there is some effort on the Hill to get the legislation—Trent Lott and others have called for an independent counsel. Is that appropriate at this time?

The President. It's a legal question.

Q. OK, one other question—

The President. I have nothing else to say.

Q. Did the White House ever get a heads up from DOJ or from the FBI on the Chinese—

The President. I want to refer—ask them. Ask the White House. They're the appropriate person you're supposed to ask.

Q. Did you?

The President. No.

NOTE: The President spoke at 2:35 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Gov. Huckabee's wife, Janet; Clark County Judge Grady Runyan; Mayor Mike Kolb of Arkadelphia; and Arkansas State Senator Mike Ross.

Statement on Senate Action on the Balanced Budget Amendment

March 4, 1997

I am pleased that the Senate has heeded the warnings of eminent economists and constitutional experts from across the political spectrum, and defeated the balanced budget constitutional amendment.

At the same time, let me be clear: While I oppose a constitutional amendment, I am committed to achieving the bipartisan goal of balancing the budget by 2002. Last year,

I sent Congress a plan to balance the budget, and I submitted a balanced budget plan again a few weeks ago.

The constitutional amendment could have caused or worsened recessions, permitted a minority of legislators to hold the Nation's creditworthiness hostage, involved unelected judges in spending and tax policy, and threatened Social Security and other vital benefits.

Now that the amendment vote has taken place, I call on Congress to join me in passing a plan to balance the budget by 2002 while protecting our values, strengthening education, and providing targeted tax relief to working families.

At the end of Congress' last session, we saw several instances of productive bipartisan cooperation. I hope that we can continue this spirit of bipartisanship and make progress for the American people by reaching agreement on a balanced budget plan this year. All it takes is their votes and my signature.

It's time to do the real work of balancing the budget.

Message to the Congress Transmitting the Hong Kong-United States Extradition Agreement

March 3, 1997

To the Congress of the United States:

With a view to receiving the advice and consent of the Senate to ratification as a treaty, I transmit herewith the Agreement Between the Government of the United States of America and the Government of Hong Kong for the Surrender of Fugitive Offenders signed at Hong Kong on December 20, 1996 (hereinafter referred to as "the Agreement"). In addition, I transmit for the information of the Senate, the report of the Department of State with respect to the Agreement. As a treaty, this Agreement will not require implementing legislation.

This Agreement will, upon entry into force, enhance cooperation between the law enforcement communities of the United States and Hong Kong, and will provide a framework and basic protections for extraditions after the reversion of Hong Kong to the sovereignty of the People's Republic of China on July 1, 1997. Given the absence

of an extradition treaty with the People's Republic of China, this Treaty would provide the means to continue an extradition relationship with Hong Kong after reversion and avoid a gap in law enforcement. It will thereby make a significant contribution to international law enforcement efforts.

The provisions in this Agreement follow generally the form and content of extradition treaties recently concluded by the United States. In addition, the Agreement contains several provisions specially designed in light of the particular status of Hong Kong. The Agreement's basic protections for fugitives are also made expressly applicable to fugitives surrendered by the two parties before the new treaty enters into force.

I recommend that the Senate give early and favorable consideration to the Agreement and give its advice and consent to its ratification as a treaty.

William J. Clinton

The White House,
March 3, 1997.

NOTE: This message was released by the Office of the Press Secretary on March 5.

Remarks on Signing the Memorandum on Child Safety Lock Devices for Handguns and an Exchange With Reporters

March 5, 1997

The President. Good morning. I'd like to welcome here Senators Biden and Boxer, Durbin and Feinstein, Kohl; Congressmen Conyers, Schumer, and Congresswoman Carolyn McCarthy; along with Deputy Attorney General Jamie Gorelick, Treasury's Under Secretary for Enforcement Ray Kelly; our friends Jim and Sarah Brady; and members of the law enforcement community. Did I leave anyone from Congress out? Senators? [*Inaudible*] Did I get everybody? Good.

Four years ago, we made a commitment to take our streets back from crime and violence with a comprehensive plan: first, to put 100,000 community police officers on our streets, to put new, tough penalties on the books, to steer young people away from crime and gangs and drugs, to keep guns out